



FINAL REPORT

Iowa Rivers and Waterways Study Committee

January 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Dick L. Dearden, Co-chairperson
Senator William A. Dotzler, Jr.
Senator Hubert Houser
Senator David Johnson
Senator Brian Schoenjahn

Representative Lee Hein, Co-chairperson
Representative Rob Bacon
Representative Charles Isenhardt
Representative Jarad J. Klein
Representative Patti Ruff

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AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Iowa Rivers and Waterways Study Committee was created by the Legislative Council for the 2013 Legislative Interim and authorized to hold one meeting. The charge of the committee was to consult with interested parties in considering options for restoring the quality of Iowa's rivers and waterways. Interested parties may include engineers, local watershed partnerships, persons who farm near rivers and waterways, anglers, boaters, and other interested parties. The committee was also charged to develop recommendations for an initial plan to prioritize river and waterway projects and provide defined goals and measurable improvements.



I. Proceedings

The committee met on December 10, 2013, to receive testimony from various experts and interested parties regarding river restoration. The committee agreed to meet again during the 2014 Legislative Session. The committee met on January 16, 2014, to discuss recommendations.

II. December 10, 2013, Meeting

A. Department of Natural Resources

Mr. Mike Steuck, Manchester Fisheries Management Office, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, provided information regarding the necessary ingredients for river restoration, components of quality streams in Iowa, factors that affect stream quality, and the benefits of restoring rivers and streams. Mr. Nate Hooegeveen, Director of Rivers Programs, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, identified parties interested in river restoration, the positive economic growth opportunities resulting from river restoration, healthy ecological rivers, and types of restoration techniques. Mr. Mike McGhee, Lake Restoration, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, described the lake restoration program for Iowa's public lakes. Mr. McGhee discussed the methodology for prioritizing lake restoration projects which included factors such as water quality, the benefit to the public, restoration potential, and the hydrology of the watershed where the lakes are located. The goals of lake restoration are water clarity; beaches meeting recreational use standards; sustainable, healthy lake systems; and removal of lakes from impaired water lists. Mr. McGhee stressed the importance of community-based planning in the lake restoration process. Mr. Todd Bishop, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, discussed the funding of river conservation projects by leveraging state money for federal money.

B. Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Mr. Jim Gillespie, Director, Soil Conservation Division, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, provided information regarding the department's watershed and water quality projects around the state, how each project is different and requires different solutions, the importance of local partnership, and the need to stop downcutting of timber along rivers, slow the incidence of vertical river banks, stabilize the toe or base of riverbanks, protect and build floodplains, remeander streams, and establish deep-rooted prairie vegetation with intermixed trees.

C. Nongovernmental Organizations

Mr. Jerry Peckumn, Iowa Rivers Revival, identified the river-related activities of his organization and what practices are included in river restoration. Mr. Peckumn advocated for a statewide river restoration program that would include public/private partnerships, establish statewide criteria and regional targeting, provide education and training, set criteria priorities for river restoration moneys, and research and monitor river restoration projects. Mr. Peckumn recommended appropriating \$300,000 to the Department of Natural Resources for purposes of allowing the department to conduct a planning process for a statewide program. Mr. Todd Sutphin, Environmental Programs and Services, Iowa Soybean Association, identified the environmental programs and services that the association provides and discussed projects in 65 defined watersheds that the association is



either active in or supporting. Mr. Sutphin also discussed the association's efforts in oxbow restoration.

D. Experiences From Other States

Mr. Martin Melchior, Regional Director, Interfluve, discussed the economic importance of rivers and river restoration in terms of tourism, land, and job creation. Mr. Melchior identified river restoration practices from other states which included the use of riparian vegetation, habitat recovery, spawning habitat creation, bank stabilization, bank reconstruction, channel relocation as required by mitigation, remeandering of streams, urban channel reclamation, incised channel reclamation, ditch reclamation, wetland channel reclamation, golf course reclamation, fish bypass channel routes, culvert fish passages at blockages, dam removal, passive bluff stabilization, and grade control to prevent headcut migration and soil loss. Mr. Melchior discussed the varying costs of projects and that typically in other states with statewide programs, projects are led by local watershed groups with assistance from dedicated state staff who hire prequalified experts in design and construction. Rarely do states have a unified statewide plan; rather, states typically either have active, well-organized state plans or more commonly piecemeal projects or a general plan. Mr. Melchior identified the essentials to a state river restoration program as multiple cooperating partners, a dedicated restoration staff at the state level, adequate program and project funding, watershed group initiation and assistance, technical guidance from the state, enforceable dam safety laws, and qualified designers.

E. County Conservation Boards

Mr. Larry Gullett, Director, Johnson County Conservation Board, identified the needs of local communities including expertise for methodology and techniques, stream assessment protocols, identification of river and stream segments that can improve as part of mitigation efforts, and training and education. Mr. Gullett stated that a statewide river restoration program would address local issues including clean water, protection of stream banks and infrastructure, flooding, fish and wildlife habitat, economic benefits, mitigation needs related to negative impacts from development, removal or modification of aging and deteriorating dams, and providing local focal points for communities.

F. Urban Waterways

Ms. Mimi Wagner, river restoration consultant, stated that the goal of river restoration should be to develop resilient and self-sustaining natural systems and described the stream assessment protocol that she uses. Ms. Wagner described the stream assessments and projects that she has conducted in Ames. Mr. Tom Brownlow, City Administrator, Charles City, explained the river and water quality projects conducted recently in Charles City. Mr. Brownlow discussed the various aspects of the river park and the economic impact the park has had on the city. Mr. Brownlow described the permeable paving projects the city has undertaken and the resulting reduction in storm water runoff. Mr. Brownlow also suggested the adoption of a water quality trading program. Mr. Wayne Petersen, Urban Conservation Program, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, discussed his work with stream corridor stabilization in urban and suburban areas in the state. Mr. Petersen discussed the special challenges of working with streams in urban areas which include the infrastructure included in urban stream corridors, private property structures that



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are often at risk, confined spaces, corridors that are fragmented by multiple ownership, and the increased costs of urban stream stabilization.

G. Private Landowners

Ms. Jody Kerns and Mr. Eric Boehm shared their experiences of doing river restoration projects on their own land at their own expense in rural Iowa.

III. January 16, 2014, Meeting Recommendations

The committee met on January 16, 2014, to discuss recommendations. Co-chairperson Hein distributed a document to the committee that included a preamble and two recommendations. The committee adopted the preamble and recommendations unanimously. The document provided the following:

In light of the information this interim committee has received from agencies, landowners, and with other involved entities in river restoration, plus the amount of interest this issue has generated in public comments from Iowans across the state, we feel that it is clear that river and waterway restoration is necessary, that it will provide numerous benefits to water quality and wildlife habitat in Iowa, and should be a focus of state government.

To that end, we move that the committee make the following recommendations:

- That the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, in collaboration with other involved entities, develop a plan that builds upon current and emergent efforts and related programs to identify and facilitate meaningful and effective river restoration priorities.
- That the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship continue to initiate and cooperate in demonstration projects with local landowners and watershed groups to provide examples of options and outcomes that could address a range of restoration needs and opportunities.

IV. Public Comment

The committee received public comment on issues related to the committee's charge through the General Assembly's website from October 17, 2013, through January 16, 2014. The comments were publically viewable on the website and have been compiled in a document for archival purposes. The archival document may be accessed from the "Committee Documents" link on the committee's Internet site:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/committee?ga=85&session=2&groupID=19055>

V. Materials Filed With the Legislative Services Agency

The following materials listed were distributed at or in connection with the meetings and are filed with the Legislative Services Agency. The materials may be accessed from the "Committee



Documents” link on the committee’s Internet site:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/committee?ga=85&session=2&groupID=19055>

1. Tentative Agenda, December 10, 2013
2. Adopted Rules
3. Presentation — Mr. Mike Steuck
4. Handout — Mr. Nate Hoogeveen
5. Presentation — Mr. Jim Gillespie
6. Handout — Mr. Jim Gillespie
7. Handout — Senator David Johnson
8. Handout — Mr. Larry Gullett
9. Presentation — Mr. Jerry Peckumn
10. Presentation — Mr. Todd Sutphin
11. Presentation — Mr. Martin Melchior
12. Handout — Mr. Mike McGhee
13. Presentation — Mr. Todd Bishop
14. Presentation — Ms. Mimi Wagner
15. Presentation — Mr. Tom Brownlow
16. Presentation — Mr. Wayne Petersen
17. Presentation — Ms. Jody Kerns
18. Handout — Ms. Jody Kerns
19. Handout — Mr. Eric Boehm
20. Briefing — LSA Legal Services Division
21. Tentative Agenda, January 16, 2014
22. Handout — Co-chairperson Hein
23. Archive — Public Comments Received by the Iowa Rivers and Waterways Study Committee